# Announcing "Milestones in Cutaneous Biology"

*If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.*

Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727)

This month the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology* is launching a new feature, Milestones in Cutaneous Biology. The Journal has been very active in documenting the history of the people involved in investigative dermatology (Baer, 1994; Holubar and Wolff, 1989) and the history of the Society for Investigative Dermatology (Baer, 1989). From the observation of Sir Percivall Pott in 1775 that the scrotal skin cancers found in chimney sweeps were due to "a lodgement of soot in the rugae of the scrotum" (Pott, 1775), to the discoveries of mast cells in the skin by Paul G. Unna in 1887 (Unna, 1887), to the achievements of the leaders of twentieth-century dermatologic research, including Stephen Rothman, Marion Sulzberger, and many others, our history has rightly focused on the accomplishments of individual scientists.

With Milestones in Cutaneous Biology, we are turning our focus to the events of scientific discovery that are the foundation of current knowledge of skin biology and disease. Our goal with this project is to explore the key scientific discoveries and observations that form our body of knowledge about the skin. For this month, Drs. Andrew Kowalczyk and David Rubinstein, working with a group of experts in epidermal desmosomes, have searched out the key papers and discoveries that have led to our current understanding of what holds the epidermis together. These papers are presented with a brief commentary that highlights their importance. The Milestones are intended to inform the reader about specific seminal discoveries that form the basis of what we know today. It is also our goal to provide the reader with some insight into the evolution of thought that occurs with scientific discovery and is critical to the development of new ideas.

The inaugural Milestones will be joined on a regular basis by new Milestones focused on the basement membrane, autoimmune blistering diseases, and keratinocytes. Over the next two years, additional Milestones will be developed and published that cover the entirety of cutaneous biology. With the development of more Milestones, the reader will be able to explore investigative dermatology both by subject and through time, thereby gaining a growing portrait of how our present-day knowledge of skin biology has evolved.

It is also our hope that these Milestones will be dynamic and that "new classics" will be added on a regular basis. We recognize that the development of any set of Milestones, even by a group of thoughtful experts, includes the unavoidable element of personal choice. Almost certainly, specific Milestones will not cite specific papers that others consider absolutely critical. We hope, however, that even such omissions will result in increased dialogue and understanding and ultimately increase our collective and individual scientific bibliographies. Ultimately, Milestones will provide an easy and accessible source to find a compilation of contributions to investigative dermatology from throughout the scientific community that has both historical and contemporary importance.

Many thanks are owed to the individuals who have dedicated the time and energy to compiling these initial Milestones, and all future contributions. Their energy and enthusiasm for these projects demonstrate that the joy of discovery can be kindled by looking both backward and forward. The future of investigative dermatology is bright, but there are also many challenges. We are hopeful that readers will enjoy these brief journeys through scientific discovery and that Milestones in Cutaneous Biology will be a useful beacon that illuminates both our history and our future as we continue to work together to advance our understanding of skin biology and disease.

*History is a guide to navigation in perilous times. History is who we are and why we are the way we are.*

David McCullough

**Look for Milestones in Cutaneous Biology at http://www.nature.com/milestones/skinbio**

***Russell P. Hall III***[1]
*Deputy Editor*

[1]*Correspondence: Dr Russell P. Hall III, Department of Dermatology, Duke University Medical Center, Box 3135, Durham, North Carolina 27710, USA. E-mail: hall0009@mc.duke.edu*

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